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Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 15 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)
later: Mr. Valladores (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Honduras)
later: Mr. Al-Nasser (Chairperson) ..... (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/64/21 and 262)

1. **Mr. Elsherbini** (Egypt) said that the role of information and communications technology had become pivotal in fashioning global public opinion, in dealing with international crises and in decision-making. In consequence, the United Nations had greater responsibility than ever for promoting international cooperation with a view to the establishment of a more just and objective world information order.

2. He called on the Department of Public Information to continue its efforts to develop and update the United Nations information message and disseminate it around the world, so as to make it possible to deal adequately with the challenges of the times, which affected developing and least developed countries in particular. In that connection, he reaffirmed the importance of multilingualism and achieving the desired balance between the six official languages. It was important also to diversify the media used and to mix the new with the traditional with a view to achieving the broadest outreach possible, bringing peoples together and fostering dialogue and understanding between cultures and civilizations.

3. He urged the Department to continue to improve the quality and content of its coverage so as to enhance regional and local understanding of the work of the Organization; improve the integration between the work of Headquarters and that of information centres around the world; and ensure professional development for staff. In that context his delegation reiterated its call for strengthening the role of the main information centres in Cairo, Mexico City and Pretoria and supporting the integration of joint action among them and with centres in neighbouring countries. It also called for expansion of the Organization's information structure in the various geographic regions and improvement of the level of the work carried out, especially in developing and least developed countries and conflict zones.

4. His delegation encouraged the Department to continue its focus on programmes and activities relating to the achievement of economic and social development by Member States, especially in Africa, and called upon it to continue its information programme on the Palestinian issue, reporting the suffering of the Palestinian people under the occupation and the violations of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law to which they were subjected by the Israeli occupying authority. He reaffirmed the importance of the Department's role, through its all-inclusive, objective information service, in promoting a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and an end to Israeli occupation of Arab lands.

5. **Mr. Shafkat** (Pakistan) said that at a critical time of global polarization and misunderstandings, the Department of Public Information must ensure that information and communications were put to use to serve as a bridge between cultures and religions. It must also create better awareness of issues of global importance like climate change, peace and security, development and United Nations reform; and there should be parity among all official languages in the communication of the United Nations messages. The Department had brought into sharp focus the achievements and challenges faced by the United Nations, and in that work, the importance of its close cooperation with other substantive departments, especially through its strategic communications services, could not be overemphasized.

6. Pakistan attached high priority to the work of the United Nations information centres around the world. It hoped that the Department would continue to strengthen those centres and that their financial and staff requirements would be met.

7. Pakistan, which was committed to freedom of expression and a free media, was among the few countries where the Government's policies had created an enabling environment for the private sector as the engine of growth for electronic media. As a result, there had been a surge in private media: over 20 television channels and almost 65 radio stations aired independent programming; almost 300 dailies, periodicals and magazines were being published; and 14 news agencies catered to media needs.

8. The countries with a monopoly on information and communications technology were influencing world affairs by promoting their own values in the many countries with limited access to technology. The Committee on Information had stressed the need to meet the technology requirements of developing countries. Journalists from all countries should be given equitable access to the United Nations and to the

Secretary-General. His delegation proposed that each mission should be issued an additional media pass during the high-level segment of the General Assembly to permit effective reporting.

9. *Mr. Valladores (Honduras), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

10. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that freedom of speech was a pillar of democracy on which all human rights and fundamental freedoms depended. Freedom of expression that did not offend against beliefs, religions or public decency were guaranteed by constitutions and international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. World Press Day, organized every year by the Department of Public Information, was a reminder of the importance of freedom of expression to human rights and fundamental freedoms and to the advancement of societies.

11. In order for information to achieve its purpose, it was essential to narrow the digital gap between developed and developing countries by using the advances made in information technology and communications. If the international community was intent on establishing a new and more balanced world information and communication order in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/182, what was needed was cooperation with a view to developing information and communications infrastructure and human resources in developing countries.

12. While the easy flow of information in developing countries required the use of modern equipment, traditional media such as radio and the press must not be neglected, for they were a major source of information for the peoples of those countries. The United Nations information centres were a fount of information on United Nations activities and achievements and must therefore be well supplied with publications and other materials.

13. The Department deserved praise for its commitment to the broadest outreach possible and its untiring efforts in covering the many issues of concern to the Organization, which made it the resounding voice of the United Nations. There was consequently a need for equality among the six official languages in all information matters. He hoped that the Department would continue its activities, backed by the General Assembly, in the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine, including the training programme for Palestinian journalists, until an equitable resolution of that question was achieved.

14. **Mr. Al-Aqil** (Saudi Arabia) said that, given the enormous influence of modern media, the need for transparency, accuracy and impartiality in the role of the Department of Public Information, as the voice of the United Nations, was more important than ever, particularly as the unlimited flow of information on the Internet and via satellite had created an enormous gap between advanced countries and developing countries, whose lack of resources prevented their access to modern information technology. Saudi Arabia commended the important role played by the United Nations through the Department in solving growing global problems and challenges and focusing on the main priorities, thus helping the international community to gain a better understanding of emerging issues. In the context of the dialogue of cultures and religions, Saudi Arabia had called for the creation of "healthy climates" for the spread of values of dialogue, tolerance and moderation among cultures and peoples.

15. His country's experience in combating terrorism through an approach based on dialogue and ideas had been lauded around the world and adopted by some major countries. In 2005, the Kingdom had held a counter-terrorism conference attended by experts from over 60 countries. The conference had adopted the Riyadh Declaration, which affirmed a united international will to combat terrorism and extremism, and culminated in a call by King Abdullah for the creation of an international counter-terrorism centre under United Nations auspices, which, it was hoped, would soon become a reality.

16. Greater resources should be allocated to achieving full equality among the languages of the United Nations and eliminating the disparity between the Organization's web sites in the six official languages. A global media code of ethics should be drafted to define appropriate legal and moral standards of objectivity, transparency and credibility in reporting and guarantee the safety of persons working in the media, especially in conflict zones. Saudi Arabia hoped that, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions, the Department would devote greater attention to Middle East issues and in particular the suffering of the Palestinian people. His delegation expressed appreciation to the Committee on Information for its efforts to achieve greater media freedom without clashing with traditional and cultural values.

17. **Mr. Kim** Chol Min (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that information and communications technologies, which played an important role in promoting social development and human welfare, were still controlled by a handful of developed countries, so that the developing countries never enjoyed the benefits. Moreover, certain countries misused the modern tools to achieve their sinister purposes — promoting their own values, disseminating distorted information, causing social chaos and even instigating the overthrow of Governments — rather than making them available to promote world peace, prosperity and justice. A typical example was "Radio Free Asia", operated by the United States of America to target countries including his own: the United States continued to wage large-scale psychological warfare aimed at bringing down his Government, in outrageous violation of the Charter of the United Nations.

18. It should therefore be a priority to establish a just new world information and communication order based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, justice and objectivity, and at the service of world peace and security, health, social development and sustainable development. The United Nations and developed countries should assist developing countries in their efforts to improve their information and communications infrastructures and also take measures to enhance international cooperation and ensure free access to and transfer of the necessary technology and expertise. His Government, despite the stifling economic embargo imposed by hostile forces, had managed to improve its information and communications infrastructure, and was using information in the service of nation-building.

19. **Mr. Bonkoungou** (Burkina Faso) observed that since information was a strategic United Nations tool for making the Organization better known to the wider world public, the plans for the revitalization of the Department of Public Information and the improvement of its services should be fully implemented. The Department had done well to give priority to issues of peace, development, human rights, climate change and the Millennium Development Goals. However, the efforts to ensure a more balanced distribution of information in the six official languages should continue to be pursued. His delegation commended the steps taken to better integrate the new technologies into the Department's communications strategies, which should foster international cooperation in reducing the digital divide by giving the developing countries better access to technology.

20. Although clearly the Department could not remain on the sidelines of new developments in the area of information and communications, it could not ignore the needs of the people in developing countries who had no access to the modern tools and continued to rely on traditional media like the press, radio and television for their information. The international community must give whatever assistance was needed to strengthen the human and technological resources of the public and private media in those countries. Regional, South-South and North-South cooperation were crucial to bringing about a reduction of the digital divide.

21. The network of United Nations information centres had proven its value in giving the people of developing countries access to information. Unfortunately, however, insufficient resources were handicapping a number of the centres including the regional information centre in Ouagadougou, which the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information had visited earlier in the year. The Ouagadougou centre worked with national radio and television in four countries — Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad — and was raising awareness of common concerns such as drug trafficking, transborder crime, child trafficking and child labour, and climate issues. The Department of Public Information must give the centre additional support so that it could keep doing its invaluable work.

22. **Mr. Alotaibi** (Kuwait) commended the Department of Public Information on the constructive information policies and reforms it had adopted to keep up with rapid developments in the field of information and communications. He stressed that information must not be used for control or for imposing a particular culture or ideology, but for dialogue and communication among peoples and cultures. Efforts must be continued to strengthen multilingualism and fair treatment for all six official United Nations languages in all the Department's activities. He also called on the Department to redouble its efforts to help developing countries improve their information institutions, especially in the areas of training and publication, in order to help close the digital divide.

23. Efforts should be continued to protect journalists and news correspondents and to facilitate the free and

effective performance of their work. All aggression against them must be condemned.

24. He praised the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for its information-dissemination efforts in developing countries. The Department of Public Information should be encouraged to continue to report on the Palestinian-Israeli question and give proper coverage to the ongoing brutal Israeli aggression against the occupied Palestinian people.

25. The freedom of expression and opinion provided for by Kuwait's Constitution had contributed to the development of Kuwait's media institutions, as attested by many States and non-governmental organizations.

26. **Mr. Bakhtin** (Russian Federation) said that his delegation was encouraged by the efforts of the Department of Public Information to highlight United Nations priority issues in the areas of peace and security, non-proliferation and disarmament, the Millennium Development Goals, human rights, climate change, the world financial and economic crisis, the global food crisis and the influenza A (H1N1) virus. It welcomed the ongoing rationalization of the work of the United Nations information centres, including the strategic redeployment of resources, expanded use of the latest information and communications technology and enhanced cooperation at the regional level. It was only by promptly and effectively countering misinformation about the work of the United Nations that the Department and its network of information centres could improve the Organization's public image.

27. His delegation welcomed the Department's efforts to develop partnerships with non-governmental and non-profit organizations through regular briefings and the holding of the annual conference for NGOs. It was also pleased to note that the Department had become more receptive to the opinions of Member States and information centres with regard to the selection of candidates for participation in those events. He thanked the Secretary-General for his participation in the launch of a lecture series in Moscow in March 2009, the aim of which had been to create and disseminate video recordings of lectures by leading political and public figures in the six official languages of the United Nations. His delegation also attached great importance to the Department's efforts to raise awareness of the Organization's work among young people. In that connection, he highlighted the success of the tenth Model United Nations held in Moscow in April 2009, which had been attended by the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information.

28. Noting that the Department was expanding United Nations news, radio and Internet services in all the official languages, he said that all types of Russian language coverage of the work of the United Nations should be strengthened. The United Nations News Centre in Russian was one of the most reliable sources of information about the Organization's work and was increasingly important in the light of the growing number of Internet users in the Russian Federation. It also served to strengthen the position of the Russian language in the United Nations, in line with the principle of multilingualism. His delegation was therefore concerned that it remained a pilot project with minimal resources and requested the Under-Secretary-General to ensure its continuity and to provide information about the prospects for enhancing it.

29. His delegation was pleased to note the progress made in the implementation of the principle of multilingualism on the United Nations website, although much remained to be done with regard to the Internet portals of other entities in the United Nations system. It also welcomed the steps taken to modernize further the work of United Nations Radio and Television, to develop webcasting and to catalogue and digitize the Organization's photographic and video archives.

30. In November 2009 the first Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety would take place in Moscow, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 62/244. Its aim would be to expand international cooperation with regard to road safety and to encourage national efforts to reduce the number of road accidents. The Conference would also call upon the General Assembly to declare 2010-2020 the decade of action for road safety. His delegation would appreciate the Department's involvement in publicizing the work of the Conference.

31. Welcoming the continued efforts to enhance the work of the Department's field offices, including through the use of new information technology, he said that the United Nations Information Centre in Moscow carried out information and awareness-raising activities both within the Russian Federation and throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States on topics such as the accessibility of new information and

communications technology to disabled persons, corporate social responsibility in the current crisis, human rights and Holocaust remembrance. The Russian-language service of United Nations Radio also deserved recognition for the quality of its work and its continued collaboration with the major Russian radio station Voice of Russia. However, inequality in access to new information and communications technology persisted. He reiterated his delegation's commitment to the principle of access for all without exception to the benefits of the global information society, so as to ensure freedom of expression and equal participation for all.

32. In 2009 the fourth International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust had taken place. His delegation was pleased to note that representatives of Russian-speaking veterans' associations had participated in the events organized by the Department. Commemoration of the Holocaust would be incomplete without a mention of the liberators, including the Soviet troops that had liberated the Auschwitz camp. In the events it organized to commemorate the Holocaust, the Department should ensure that objective and accurate information was included on the outcome of the Second World War. May 2010 would mark the sixty-fifth anniversary of the victory of the anti-Hitler coalition in the Second World War, which had led to the birth of the United Nations. Therefore, all attempts to rewrite history and to rehabilitate former Nazis should be viewed as violations of the Charter of the United Nations and the principles on which it was based.

33. **Ms. Khan** (Bangladesh), while welcoming the coverage of United Nations peacekeeping operations in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/262), said that the heroic story of those operations remained largely untold. As a major troop-contributing country with almost 10,000 peacekeepers currently serving in various peace operations, Bangladesh was keen to see that that story reflected the role of individual countries and the sacrifice of their soldiers. Yet she did not recall seeing any publication or documentary of the Department of Public Information highlighting the enormous sacrifice that Bangladesh had suffered with the deaths of as many as 100 of its peacekeepers from 32 missions over the years. Such contributions must be recorded for today's youth and tomorrow's leaders, and she pledged her country's support to assist the Department as best it could.

34. Bangladesh welcomed the coverage of climate change but, as one of the low-lying countries that was under threat, urged the Department to look at the human dimension of the problems facing coastal countries and to tell that story as it unfolded. There too she pledged her country's support for the Department and its audio-visual units.

35. At the previous session of the General Assembly, her delegation had offered assistance in raising awareness of Mother Language Day. Unfortunately, the Department had either relegated it to the bottom of its priorities for 2009 or abolished it altogether, the only sign being a message from the Department on Mother Language Day 2009. Accordingly, she reiterated her country's offer to explain the background to that Day and peoples' collective journey to promote their respective mother languages.

36. In conclusion, she welcomed the Department's use of new media and social networking and called for increased human and financial resources for the United Nations Information Centres, particularly in the least developed countries. The Dhaka centre had emerged as a key player in promoting the Organization's ideals and priorities, including the Millennium Development Goals. She urged the Department to send a video team to record the countrywide rally in support of the MDGs to be led by the Bangladeshi Parliament in October 2009, at which the Prime Minister would be the guest of honour.

37. **Mr. Maboundou** (Congo) said that the Department of Public Information, which occupied a central position in the Organization, must be guided by transparency, fairness, impartiality and consistency in publicizing its messages. It must apprise the public of the world of the problems facing the international community and of the proper responses to those problems. The Department had acquitted itself well of those tasks. However, it should be given a clearer mandate and adequate financing to make it more operational and more competitive. There must also be full collaboration between the Department and the Committee on Information as they went about their respective tasks.

38. The vitally important role played by the United Nations information centres, as the most direct vehicles of communication with world opinion, should be recognized. They were the best way of reaching the widest possible public, particularly in the developing

countries, and of making United Nations action more visible and understandable. Congo urged the centres to disseminate more information on the United Nations peacekeeping operations and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It supported the request made by a majority of the members of the Committee on Information for the establishment of a United Nations information centre in Luanda, Angola, for Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa.

39. The observance of World Press Freedom Day was significant because it effectively highlighted the right to freedom of expression. Congo also welcomed the observance in September 2009 of the International Day of Peace, at the behest of the Department of Public Information, on the theme of disarmament. The aim had been to mobilize public opinion about the need to free the world of the danger of nuclear weapons. Both the Department and the Committee on Information were doing good work in promoting international peace and security.

40. Multilingualism and the parity of the six official United Nations languages must be maintained in all the activities of the Organization, including communications to the Committee on Information. Information played a paramount role in furthering the dialogue between cultures and religions in order to find urgent solutions to armed conflict and terrorism. Both the Committee on Information and the Department of Public Information must continue to work with UNESCO in that regard.

41. His delegation was deeply concerned about the imbalanced access to the new information and communications technologies and believed that there was an urgent need to help the developing countries catch up. With the help of its development partners, his Government had for the past two years been setting up a huge undersea fibre-optic telecommunications project, which should shortly allow even the most remote Congolese population centres to fall into step with globalization. Building on the General Assembly's endorsement of the World Summit on the Information Society in resolution 60/252, the Department of Public Information must highlight the advantages that the use of the Internet and other information and communications technologies could offer societies and economies, and suggest means of bridging the digital divide.

42. **Mr. Cujba** (Moldova) commended the Department of Public Information for its efforts to promote global awareness and mobilize support for the Organization's goals. His delegation welcomed the actions taken by the Department to increase its efficiency, including through the targeted delivery of information and the building of partnerships with civil society. It hoped that the expansion of the Department's contacts with the media and non-governmental organizations and its use of new information and communications technologies would allow it to reach a much larger audience more effectively. At the same time, the intensive activities of the United Nations information centres and of communications units in United Nations offices at the country level were the most direct means of communication with the world public.

43. United Nations agencies in Moldova, which worked throughout the country, constantly sought to make the local population more aware of the Organization's mandate and activities. In close cooperation with local authorities, United Nations documentation centres had been established in a university and in a city library and a third would open later in the month, with the objective of involving the young people of Moldova and increasing their participation in various United Nations activities. Through the United Nations Journalists' Club, the United Nations resident coordinator's office was cooperating effectively with Moldovan print and electronic media. The Club was using its limited funds very efficiently and was providing opportunities to journalists for professional growth and personal development.

44. The Department of Public Information should reinforce the network of United Nations information centres in order to maximize the impact of public information and should expand cooperation among them locally and regionally. The services provided at the regional and subregional level should be improved; and the centres should also assist the communications units of the United Nations offices in countries where no centres were in place by exchanging experience and best practices, supporting the media and providing training to journalists, representatives of NGOs and civil society.

45. Freedom of expression and freedom of the press were crucially important to all societies and essential to building democracy. His Government strongly opposed efforts to control the media in order to distort or suppress information and influence public opinion and was making every effort to strengthen democratic

institutions, freedom of expression and access to information. Restrictions on the media and on reporters had been eliminated, and journalists had access to Parliament and to Government meetings, documents and officials. Additional steps had been taken to ensure free access for the international media and unhindered reporting and the local mass media had been encouraged to cooperate with the international media Moreover, laws such as the Broadcasting Act were being amended to meet international standards so as to guarantee genuine pluralism and independence of the mass media.

46. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) resumed the Chair.*

47. **Mr. Hosseini** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation recognized the significant role of the Department of Public Information in using old and new communication tools to promote global awareness of the Organization's work. The Department must reach out to the widest possible audiences, provide accurate, relevant, impartial, balanced and timely information, promote the Organization's public image by serving as the first source of news for Member States, continue to build on its partnership with the Committee on Information, and take measures to help the developing countries bridge the digital gap. Commending the Department's efforts to address many global issues, he stressed the important role of the United Nations Information Centres and reiterated his delegation's support for multilingualism and linguistic parity in all the Organization's activities.

48. The Department's emphasis on emerging global issues should not deflect its attention from older but vital issues such as the realization of the rights of self-determination and development. In that context the occupation of Palestine and the denial of the Palestinians' right to self-determination were the main reasons for the continued conflict in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Department should address the issue of the gross violation of the human and humanitarian rights of the Palestinian people living under occupation, especially the perpetration of war crimes and crimes against humanity, and should endeavour better to inform the public of the negative impact of the humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Organization's work to alleviate it.

49. Unfortunately, the media served not only for information-sharing but also as a powerful tool for the advancement of expansionist policies and the promotion of certain cultures with a view to subjugating other nations with different social and cultural backgrounds in a quest for global dominance. The media was widely abused as a tool of cultural and political hegemony and aggressive interventionist policies. It was used to distort reality, manipulate the public and induce them to support recycled or major new lies. The world was currently facing a new type of foreign aggression in the form of a soft war, in which the monopolized army of the media, supported by state-of-the-art technology, attacked its targets with well-crafted news and imposed massive censorship against them, manipulating events to glorify some countries and denigrate others. That undeclared war was undermining the culture and heritage of other nations. The United Nations was subject to the same threat. Nevertheless, the work of peace-loving nations was bearing fruit and people-centred media were attracting new audiences. With the help of the Department, the voice of the victims of the media war could be strengthened. While relying on their own capacities, peace-loving nations needed to promote cooperation among themselves and share information and technical assistance.

50. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that Colombia was fully committed to freedom of the press and freedom of expression and appreciated the work of the Department of Public Information in that regard. She commended the role of the United Nations Information Centres, one of which was located in Colombia. The Bogotá centre purveyed information about the United Nations to the most diverse audiences, especially educational institutions, and its subregional coverage was also substantial. Its activities had been useful in emergency situations, such as the H1N1 influenza outbreak, and it had served as a channel of information on such issues as peacekeeping, climate change, and the promotion of human rights. In that connection, she called attention to the centre's activities to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of United Nations peacekeeping operations, with the collaboration of universities and Government departments, which had culminated in the publication of a book entitled *Helmets for Peace*. The centre had also assisted Government departments in publicizing activities relating to the First International Congress on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration, recently held in Colombia, and promoting the forthcoming Second Review Conference of the Convention of the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and

on their Destruction (Ottawa Convention), also to be held in Colombia. The centre also collaborated with the Ministry of Education in organizing Model United Nations activities. Noting the adverse impact of budgetary limits on the network of information centres, particularly on their capacity to provide services and information to local communities, her delegation reiterated its appeal that any decision on the reorganization of that network must be taken in consultation with the host countries.

51. Multilingualism must occupy a central place in United Nations efforts to ensure universal access to information on the Organization's work; one essential element was the publication of press releases, which were often available in only one language. Her delegation welcomed the efforts to seek creative channels for the dissemination of news and information about the United Nations; multilingualism must be a fundamental objective in that proposal, so that press releases could be published in all the official languages. Her delegation approved of the thematic approach of the *UN Chronicle*, which had struck a proper balance between information and analysis. However, it was vital that it should be published in all the Organization's official languages.

52. **Mr. Jomaa** (Tunisia) urged the international community to do more to address the issue of the digital divide. Bridging that gap would enable millions of people around the globe to benefit from the many technologies that could assist developing and least developed countries in enhancing their economies and participating actively in the information revolution. The Department of Public Information could play a key role in promoting the international community's awareness of the importance of the Tunis Commitment and the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society adopted by the World Summit on the Information Society.

53. The lack of resources invoked in the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/262) should not impede the quest for achievement of the goal of parity among the Organization's official languages, a high priority for the Department and for the majority of Member States. Commending the Department's endeavours on the question of Palestine, he encouraged it to pursue its efforts within the framework of the Special Information Programme in order to educate the international community on that important issue.

54. He urged the Department to pursue its efforts to promote the ideals and lofty values of the United Nations. The support of Member States and greater interaction and cooperation between them and the Department were necessary if the latter was to fulfil its sweeping task of ensuring better understanding of the problems and challenges facing the international community in order to achieve the hoped-for results. In that regard, the Committee on Information must constantly monitor the issues on its agenda. Its annual substantive session should be followed by regular consultations with the Department, energizing its work to bring it into line with the needs of a rapidly developing world.

55. **Mr. Liu Yutong** (China) commended the Department of Public Information for its work during the general debate in the General Assembly, the Summit on Climate Change and the Security Council Summit on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament held in September, which had drawn much attention from the media and from people around the world, attesting to the importance that all Governments attached to the Organization. A more balanced and impartial information and communications order would help countries work together to address the challenges. Over the previous year, the Department had disseminated objective, accurate and timely information worldwide, reporting on the Organization's work in various areas and the results achieved. News media, especially the mainstream Western media outlets with international influence, should follow the Department's example of providing accurate information and balanced coverage and should abandon bias and prejudice and refrain from seeking sensational or dramatic effect simply to attract attention. News practitioners should not be opinion leaders or public-opinion shapers, but reliable providers of objective, accurate and timely information, helping their audiences to learn the truth and form their own opinions. It was only by developing a set of professional and ethical codes of conduct and forging an atmosphere of objective and impartial coverage that the news media could play a more effective role and make an indirect contribution to world peace, stability, development and prosperity.

56. Since developing countries formed the majority of Member States, the Department should attach great importance to development, which lay at the heart of all the challenges facing humankind. The Governments of developing countries shouldered the historic

responsibility of developing their economies and improving their people's livelihood. The Department should guide the media and the public, through thematic publicity and information, towards a correct understanding of the issues of development and of their importance, which would help forge common ground for resolving them and prompt the international community to do its best to provide assistance to developing countries. The Department should also continue to promote dialogue and exchanges among civilizations so as to enhance understanding of the diversity of human civilizations and play a constructive role in eradicating religious, racial or cultural bias through information-sharing and dialogue on an equal footing.

57. Efforts should be made to accommodate the special needs of developing countries in gaining access to information. Many developing countries, China included, still largely relied on traditional media. While the developed, and some developing, countries enjoyed the benefits of new information advances, the Department must ensure that the information gap was narrowed rather than broadened and, while strengthening the United Nations website and exploring the use of new websites and tools, must not reduce its input to traditional forms of communication. In addition, emphasis should be placed on the equality of multiple languages, a common aspiration of all countries. He was confident that, even without an increase in the budget, the Department could play a role in that regard.

Draft resolution A on information in the service of humanity, draft resolution B on United Nations public information policies and activities and draft decision on increase in the membership of the Committee on Information (A/63/21, chap. IV)

58. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to take action jointly on draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision.

59. *It was so decided*

60. **The Chairperson** said that, in accordance with the decision the Committee had just taken, he took it that it was prepared to adopt draft resolutions A and B, which had no budget implications, and the draft decision.

61. Draft resolutions A and B and the draft decision were adopted.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.